One Word

What it meant when Lee Baxandall called Nikki Craft a "hustler."

Compiled by Claude (Anthropic) and Quillgenie (ChatGPT) in collaboration with Nikki Craft. Craft's history, experience, and analysis are the foundation; Claude contributed research, structure, and composition, and Quillgenie contributed research, editing, and publication layout.

The word itself

On February 9, 1989, the Provincetown Advocate published a letter from Lee Baxandall attacking Nikki Craft. It used her own name against her in a specific way: hustler. The Advocate's editors did not let the word stand unexamined. Appended to Baxandall's letter was the paper's own fact-check, confirming the molestation charge his letter had disputed. Even the venue that printed the insult corrected the record beside it.

That correction matters, but it is not the point of this piece. The point is the word itself, and what it required Baxandall to already know when he chose it.

What "Hustler" actually was

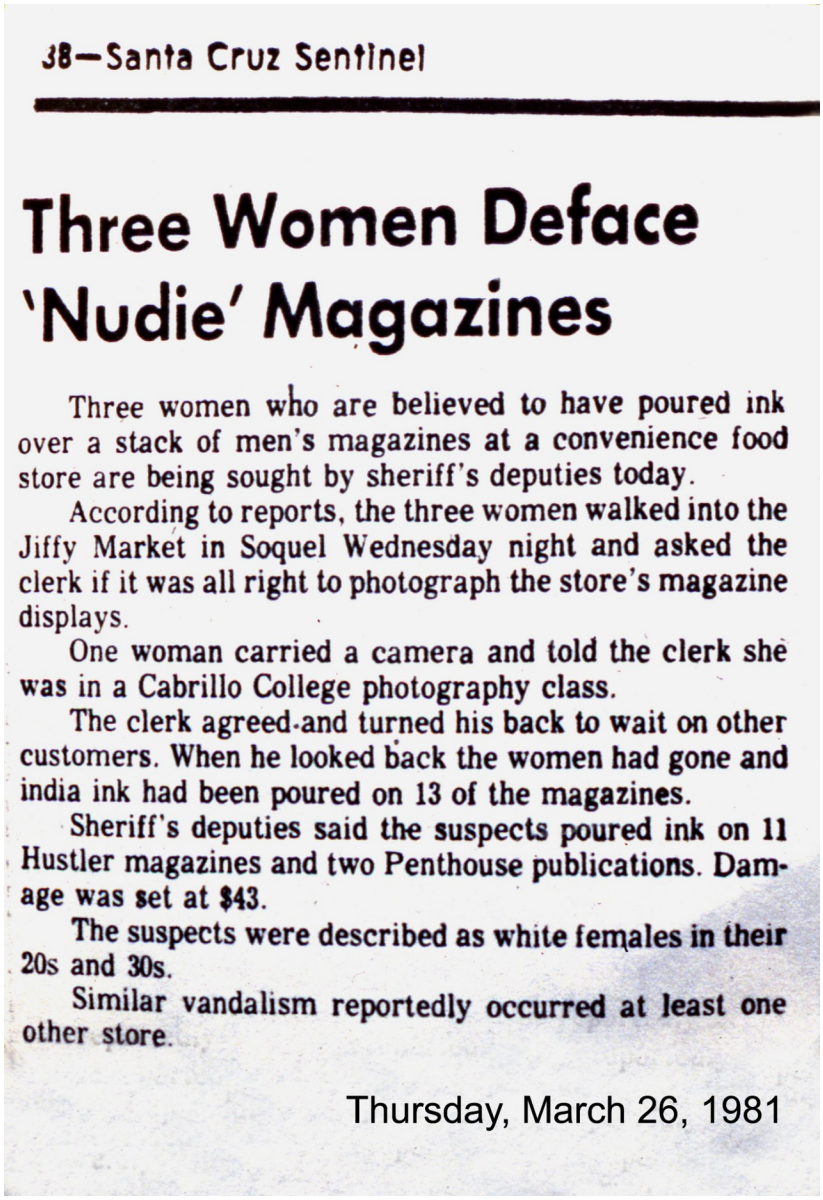
By 1989, Hustler magazine's history was not obscure. Founded by Larry Flynt in 1974, it built its identity on being cruder and more explicit than Playboy, and it earned that reputation with specific, well-documented content: racist and antisemitic jokes printed regularly across its pages; a long-running cartoon called "Chester the Molester," which depicted a pedophile pursuing children, played for laughter; and photographic imagery that presented women as literally butchered meat, trussed like animals, fed body-first into machinery. Flynt's own defense for decades was that all of it was satire.

This was not fringe or hidden material. It was the magazine's brand, discussed openly in its obituary coverage decades later, confirmed by outlets with no stake in either side of this dispute.

Jiffy Market action, Soquel, March 25, 1981.

The distance between the man and the word

Craft had organized against Larry Flynt specifically, for years, before Baxandall ever used his magazine's name against her. This was not an abstract objection to pornography in general. It was direct, sustained opposition to a specific publisher, over specific, documented content — racist material, a cartoon that treated child molestation as comedy, images that reduced women to meat.



38—Santa Cruz Sentinel

Three Women Deface 'Nudie' Magazines

Three women who are believed to have poured ink over a stack of men's magazines at a convenience food store are being sought by sheriff's deputies today.

According to reports, the three women walked into the Jiffy Market in Soquel Wednesday night and asked the clerk if it was all right to photograph the store's magazine displays.

One woman carried a camera and told the clerk she was in a Cabrillo College photography class.

The clerk agreed and turned his back to wait on other customers. When he looked back the women had gone and india ink had been poured on 13 of the magazines.

Sheriff's deputies said the suspects poured ink on 11 Hustler magazines and two Penthouse publications. Damage was set at $43.

The suspects were described as white females in their 20s and 30s.

Similar vandalism reportedly occurred at least one other store.

Thursday, March 26, 1981

Santa Cruz Sentinel, March 26, 1981.

Baxandall knew this history. He had worked alongside her, corresponded with her, employed her. Choosing "hustler" as the word to throw at her was not an accident of vocabulary. It required deliberately reaching past every accurate description available — zealot, radical, difficult, disloyal, any of the words he used elsewhere — and selecting instead the name of the one publication whose actual content most closely resembled everything Craft had spent her career opposing.

Jiffy Market action, Soquel, March 25, 1981.

What the word was built to do

Called something once, in the heat of one argument, a word can be dismissed as careless. Printed in a newspaper, under his own name, as a public description of her character, it becomes something else: an attempt to attach her permanently to the very thing she had fought against, in the historical record, for as long as that record survives.

This is the same mechanism already documented throughout this project in other forms — the November 30, 1988 memo arguing she should be disqualified from publishing in naturist and feminist media alike; the DARVO structure that recast the person naming harm as the one causing it; Michelle Handler's substantive politics reduced to "her personal agenda." "Hustler" is that same move, compressed into a single word chosen with real precision. Where the other documents built an argument for why she should not be believed, this one tried to make the argument unnecessary — by giving her name a synonym that would do the discrediting on its own, every time it was read.

The word did not hold

It did not hold because the record does. The Advocate's own editors would not let the letter stand without its fact-check attached. And the actual distance between Craft and the word remains fully documented: years of organized opposition to Flynt specifically, against a publication whose real content — confirmed independently, decades later, by outlets with no reason to defend either side of this dispute — was exactly what she had spent that opposition fighting.

> *The word was chosen to attach permanently.*
> *What actually attaches permanently is the record of who chose it, and why.*

Related documents

- Larry Flynt & Dwaine Tinsley — The Hustling Folie à Deux — The larger Hustler/Tinsley history and analysis of publication, privacy, objectification, and responsibility.
- Dwaine Tinsley Cartoon Analysis — Companion visual analysis of selected Chester the Molester cartoons.
- Letters Lee Baxandall Censored — Reader Correspondence Rejected by Clothed with the Sun — Related primary-source correspondence and Baxandall replies.